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Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 03038 191040Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 NEAE-00 MCT-01
A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 AID-05 /062 W
----------097952 191046Z /15
O R 191005Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7959
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: CONTINUED VIOLENCE IN NORTH CENTRAL AREA

REF: COLOMBO 3030

1. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION TOOK STATESMAN-LIKE POSITIONS IN THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY REGARDING THE OUT-BREAK OF VIOLENCE IN THE NORTH AND CALLED FOR CALM, THE SIT-UATION IN THOSE AREAS REMAINED TENSE AND THERE HAS BEEN A STREAM OF UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF CONTINUING VIOLENCE. THE DEATH COUNT AS OF AUGUST 18 HAD RISEN TO FOURTEEN, EIGHT OF WHOM WERE TAMILS, SIX SINHALESE.

2. SRI LANKA MILITARY SOURCES HAVE TOLD DEFENSE ATTACHE THAT TROUBLE CONTINUES IN ANURADHAPURA, MATALE, AND KANDY. ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTS THAT IN DANDY CURFEW WAS IMPOSED AT 1100 TODAY,
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PAGE 02 COLOMB 03038 191040Z

AUGUST 19. REPORTEDLY "GANGS" OF SINHALESE HAVE BEEN ROAMING KANDY, ASSULTING TAMILS AND LOOTING TAMIL SHOPS. THE POLICE-MILITARY PRESENCE IN KANDY APPARENTLY IS INSUFFICIENT TO HANDLE THESE "GANGS" AND CONSEQUENTLY ARE NOT TAKING ACTION TO HALT THE VIOLENCE. CROWDS REPORTEDLY ARE JEERING AT THE SECURITY FORCES, AND VIOLENCE IS SPREADING TO OUTLYING AREAS OF KANDY. JAFFNA, WHERE THE TROUBLE STARTED, IS QUIET, AND

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AT THE REQUEST OF THE LEADER OF THE TULF, A. AMIRTHALINGHAM, NO CURFEW IS IN EFFECT THERE. IN ADDITION TO KANDY, ACREAS NOW COVERED BY A CURFEW ARE THE ENTIRE NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE; KURUNGELA AND MATALE DISTRICTS; AND PANADURA TOWN.

3. AN INDICATION OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE GOVERNMENT VIEWS THE SITUATION IS A REPORT THAT THE MINISTRY OF DENFESE HAS APPOINTED COORDINATING OFFICERS FOR SECURITY WITH RESPONSIBILITIES SIMILAR TO THOSE ASSIGNED TO OFFICERS DURING THE 1971 INSURGENCY. THEY WILL HAVE COMPLETE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CORRDINATING ALL SECURITY MATTERS INTHEIR AREAS. MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED COORDINATING RESPONSIBILITIES IN KANDY, MATALE, ANURADHAPURA, POLONARUWA, AND KURUNEGALA AND A POLICE OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES IN JAFFNA.

4. IN THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY AUGUST 18, OPPOSITION LEADER AMIRTHALINGHAM MOVED FOR ADJOURNMENT OF DEBATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT IN ORDER TO DISCUSS THE SECURITY SITUATION. BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND AMIRTHALINGHAM STRESSED THAT THE CURRENT WAVE OF INCIDENTS ARE NEITHER COMMUNAL NOR POLITICAL. AMIRTHALINGHAM CHARACTERIZED THE JAFFNA INCIDENTS AS CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN POLICE AND CIVILIANS. AMIRTHELINGHAM ALSO CHARGED THE JAFFNA POLICE WITH NEGLIGENCE, DEMANDED THAT HIGH RANKING POLICE OFFICERS BE TRANSFERRED OUT OF JAFFNA, AND CALLED FOR AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION.

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5. PRIME MINISTER J.R. JAYEWARDENE CALLED FOR NATIONAL UNITY, SAYING THAT WHAT IS IMPORTANT AT THE MOMENT IS NOT WHAT CAUSED THE TROUBLES, BUT WHAT STEPS HAVE TO BE TAKEN TO RESTORE ORDER. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN STEPS TO RETURN THE SITUATION TO NORMAL AND THAT HE IS APPOINTING AN IMPARTIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO ASCERTAIN THE CAUSE OF THE DISTURBANCES. THE PM ALSO APPEALED TO ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT NOT TO MAKE ANY STATEMENTS THAT MIGHT INFLAME COMMUNAL FEELINGS.

6. ONE OF THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE SPREAD OF VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA IS RUMOR. IT SPREADS LIKE WILDFIRE, LEAVING IN ITS WAKE AN AIR OF UNCERTAINTY WHICH, WHEN COUPLED WITH A GENERAL DISTRUST OF PRESS REPORTS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS, MAKES FALLOW GROUND FOR AGITATORS. DESPITE PRONOUNCEMENTS THAT THE INCIDENTS ARE NON-COMMUNAL, WHAT PASSES FROM MOUTH TO EAR ARE REPORTS OF TAMILS VERSUS SINHALESE CONFRONTATIONS. THE POLICE HAVE WARNED THE PUBLIC AGAINST RUMOR MONGERS AND CLAIM TO HAVE ARRESTED SOME, BUT RUMORS ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE. ULTIMATELY, ONLY AN EFFECTIVE SECURITY FORCE ON THE GROUND WILL BRING THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.
WRIGGINS

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Sent Date: 19-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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22 May 2009
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